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REMARKS

During the April 12, 2006 telephone interview, the Examiner requested evidence of patentability over U.S. Patent No. 5,319,542 issued to King, Jr., et al. ("King"). In response to that request the following is submitted.

The present invention discloses an intranet based electronic stockroom and catalog (ESAC) that integrates searching and purchasing capabilities in one system. The system provides automated authorization, accounting and tracking of all purchases.

Claim 6, for example, recites "a system of storing, searching and purchasing a wide variety of items from an intranet based electronic stockroom and catalog (ESAC)" wherein the system includes "functions that provide integration of ESAC files with other company electronic files so that budgeting, accounting and authorization limitations are implemented with each purchase and tracking of purchases is possible."

King teaches a system that allows customers to search for, and view, the same item in multiple catalogs. See col. 2, lines 1-3. The King system is designed to give the customer an advantage by allowing him to compare attributes, such as price, of the same, or similar, item that is offered in multiple vendor catalogs. See col. 4, lines 22-24. After the customer has finished his comparative shopping and selected the desired item, he must use his own procurement system to actually order the item. See col. 5, lines 59-61, col. 6, lines 52-55, and Fig. 4. Thus, King requires at least three distinct systems, or sub-systems, in order to build a catalog, search the catalog and order a desired item. The first system being the supplier sub-system, which includes catalogs from multiple suppliers. The second sub-system is the private catalog, which is maintained at the customer's location. The third distinct sub-system is the customer's existing procurement system, which the customer must use to order items.

King fails to teach an integration of catalog functions and procurement functions, as is recited in claim 6. In fact, King teaches away from integration of the catalog and procurement functions by requiring that the customer use his own, separate, procurement system for actually ordering items. See col. 6, lines 52-55, and block 412 of Figure 4. What is referred to in King as

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an Electronic Requisition is merely a program to help fill in the fields of a paper purchase order, or hardcopy requisition. See col. 3, lines 20-21, and col. 5, lines 31-33. The hardcopy requisition is then used to initiate a purchase in the customer's existing procurement system.

By integrating catalog and procurement functions, Applicant's system requires only two distinct sub-systems; the supplier's sub-system, which includes multiple vendor catalogs, and the present ESAC, which allows searching of the multiple vendor catalogs and also provides for automated procurement of desired items. It would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to integrate these two sub-systems because linking procurement functions to budgeting functions requires allowing a non-finance module to have access to the customer's finance module. Customers typically want to keep financial information, such as budgets and available funds, secret and strictly limit access to this information. Thus, one of ordinary skill would not be motivated to combine catalog and procurement functions into one system.

The other patents that were previously applied do not make up for the deficiencies of King. U.S. Patent No. 5,970,475 issued to Barnes ("Barnes") teaches storing all catalog information at the vendor's location and requiring customers to access the catalog information via the Internet. U.S. Patent No. 6,418,416 issued to Rosenberg, et al. ("Rosenberg") teaches a network of vending machines. When an item is removed from a drawer, or shelf, of any vending machine, information is sent to a central computer indicating the shelf is empty and in need of restocking.

This post-appeal comment is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the differences between King and Applicant's invention. Other features, such as Applicant's ability to store catalog information as well as on-site inventory information, are not addressed herein.

For all of the above reasons, claim 6 is considered allowable over any combination of King, Barnes and Rosenberg. Claims 7-10 depend from claim 6 and are considered allowable for at least the same reasons. Claim 1 recites similar features as claim 6 and is considered allowable for at least the same reasons. Claims 2-5 depend from claim 1 and are considered allowable for at least the same reasons.